



Meeting Summary October 12, 2016

Attendance

Panel Members:

Hank Alinger, Chair (Absent)
Don Taylor, Vice Chair
Phil Engelke (Absent)
Bob Gorman
Sujit Mishra
Julie Wilson

DPZ Staff:

Kristin O'Connor, George Saliba, Karitsa Norman, Yvette Zhou

Plan #16-14:

Legacy at Ellicott's Retreat

Owner/Developer:

Commercial Contractors, Inc.

Architect:

NVR, Inc.

Engineer:

KCI Technologies, Inc.

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, calling for introductions of the panel, staff and project team.

2. **Review of Legacy at Ellicott's Retreat– DAP Plan #16-14**

Background

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP) is required to review this project because it is located within the *Route 40 Design Manual* area and because the proposed development is for age restricted housing. The Legacy at Ellicott's Retreat is proposed as an active adult community of 160 units with a one story clubhouse and deck/patio identified as the community amenity space. The layout is configured with an internal road system and has 10 smaller inward-facing condominium buildings with alleys. The ten buildings are six-stories each and consist of sixteen units with distinct floor plans and integrated parking. Each condominium unit has its own private garage and driveway parking space. For visitors parking, additional surface parking spaces are provided on site including a surface parking lot adjacent to Buildings #6 and #7.

Much of the site preparation was completed over the summer of 2015 under the initial development company, which subsequently pulled out of the project for financial reasons. Starting in June 2015, the site was cleared and graded and in August the first retaining walls were constructed. All of the major masonry segmental walls 0-16' in height (four in total) were completed in the fall of 2015. Fine grading of the site was conducted and completed in December of 2015 with all six (6) of the building pads set to grade (per the approved plan

DAP first reviewed the site development plan, then known as The Gatherings at Ellicott's Retreat, in February 2014. The developer subsequently selected a different builder for the site and submitted a revised site plan to reflect engineering and design changes. This revised design came before the DAP at the May 11, 2016 meeting at which time the DAP requested the applicant revise the plans and return additional design details. The DAP's October 12th review of the project is the panel's third overall review and second review since significant engineering and design changes were made when the new builder was selected.

Scope of Work

Mr. Nick Barrick, the project engineer from KCI Technologies, Inc. recapped the project by reviewing the master site plan. He showed panel members photos of the existing project site. The sewer main and service connections have been completed to all six proposed buildings on site. A segment of the asphalt road with curb and gutter has been constructed as well as all of the utilities. The clubhouse will be located above a retaining wall which has been built to its final elevation.

Since the May 11th meeting, four different options have been studied by the design team pertaining to the location of Building #6. In option 1, Building #6 was rotated to be in line with Building # 3, #4 and #5. Option 2 moved Building #6 to center the entrance on the main road. Option 3 included a large green space area while maintaining the building's alignment with Building #3, #4, and #5.

Option 4 maintained the Building #6 location shown at the May 11th meeting but will now include a green area featuring a pergola with seating. Building #7 will be pushed back slightly near the forest conservation area. The road wraps up and around to get to the Building #7 garages. Option 4 was chosen as the final layout by the design team. By selecting option 4, only five parking spaces were lost compared to other options which would have lost approximately 15 spaces. Mr. Barrick stated that parking is a commodity and was important to preserve. There are a lot of rocks around Building #6 and moving the building would require more blasting. Option 4 also allows better road grading along the garages on north side of Building #7. The previous design had about a 5%-7% grade down into the garage which is not ideal and would have directed runoff towards the garages. The selected layout allows the runoff to drain away from the building. The road along the north side of Building #7 does not connect through to the main road because existing infrastructure has already been constructed and the grade is prohibitive. Extensive work would need to be done to change the utility infrastructure already in place.

The previous design had the dumpster enclosure located at the terminus of the main drive adjacent to Building #6. This enclosure has now been relocated. A small pergola and seating area was added to the green space in the middle of the parking court between Building #6 and #7.

In front of every building stamped concrete has been included to better define each of the drives which now also include green strips to soften the area. At both the front & back building entrances, there will be two Crepe Myrtle trees planted to soften the alley corridor between the buildings. The landscaping plan calls for trees installed at every corner along the road. The proposed clubhouse features the same siding and stone facade to mimic the materials on the buildings. The architectural design of the building elevations has been enhanced to incorporate DAP recommendations from May's meeting.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor directed staff to present its comments on the project. DPZ staff member George Saliba provided a brief summary of staff comments concerning site design and building orientation, streetscape design, and architecture.

1. DPZ recommends the applicant enhance the area in front of the clubhouse and bring the amenity space into the development so that it serves as a gateway into the development as well as a terminating vista looking south.
2. DPZ recommends the applicant create a stronger streetscape design through the main drive of the development and incorporate landscaping and hardscape design features.
3. DPZ recommends the DAP examine Building #6 and look at design, streetscape and landscaping components that could be added to improve overall site design in-lieu of re-orienting the building.

4. DPZ recommends that the DAP review any design tweaks that could enhance the building elevation design for the high visibility end that is facing the street.

Mr. Taylor asked what the grade difference was from the main road down to the parking court adjacent to Building #7.

Mr. Barrick responded that it was approximately 2 foot and 9 inches.

Mr. Taylor stated that with this grade difference, the design change made to not connect the streets was understandable.

Mr. Taylor stated that the terminus of the street is the key for the project to be successful. Although the dumpster has been relocated, the right side (shown on master plan) terminus should include a design focal point such as a pergola or gazebo structure complemented by landscaping. In front of the clubhouse, a few parking spaces at the end of the street could be relocated over to the triangular island and a focal design element could be included in this location as well. This would improve the terminus at each end of the main drive which should be designed to mean something.

Mr. Barrick said the team did review relocating parking to the triangular island area but that it would decrease green space.

Mr. Taylor responded that this was debatable and that the terminus of the main street through the community was important and moving the parking to the center court would benefit the terminus.

Mr. Taylor commented that the street facing elevation of the buildings stating that the color banding on the top floor looks incomplete. The bandings should be horizontal so as to have the color go across the entire fourth floor. The top floor and the gable could be a lighter color to help cap the building. The small bathroom windows could be larger or grouped to elevate their importance as they currently look like portholes.

DAP member Bob Gorman commented that shifting parking spaces and adding a grouping of trees could provide a terminal element at the top front portion of the clubhouse. He also felt that the proposed gazebo on the north side of the site could be shifted to the end of the main road adjacent to Building #6. This would be a nicer place to sit than where the gazebo is currently proposed in the middle of a parking area.

Mr. Gorman asked if the crosswalks were to be constructed with special paving.

Mr. Barrick stated they would be stamped concrete.

Mr. Gorman stated that it would be better for residents to have more sidewalks and appropriately located crosswalks with special paving allowing better pedestrian flow within the development including around the stormwater management area located in the center. This would be a fairly simple thing to do.

DAP member Julie Wilson stated that the clubhouse was not serving as a terminating axis and could benefit from inclusion of a pergola patio with trees and possibly a fire pit (previously mentioned by the applicant) at the end of the axis. Another alternative would be to move the clubhouse building up in order to get an entrance centered on the street.

Mr. Barrick said the retaining wall does restrict the ability to shift the building.

Ms. Wilson stated that it does not have to be a symmetrical building and that she believes there needs to be additional design elements to make it a strong terminus to the main street.

Ms. Wilson, in discussing the residential buildings, expressed that she wished the building entrances faced each other instead of facing the back of the adjacent building. Ms. Wilson also recommended that some trees could be added to the front entrance to make it feel more like an entrance.

Ms. Wilson also expressed a desire to see trees added at the end of each alley.

Mr. Barrick responded that there was limited room to add trees in these areas because maintenance access to stormwater management was needed.

Ms. Wilson commented that the paving could be pulled back a little to accommodate trees at the end of the alleys.

Ms. Wilson felt the high visibility side elevation of the building with the porch should not have columns bisecting the porch entry. Removing these columns would make the porch entry more open and inviting. Adding plants and benches around it would make it feel more like a main entrance as would the addition of lights.

Ms. Wilson felt the siding could be brought down a little to strengthen the columns.

Ms. Wilson recommended using a glass door for the elevation facing the street as this will allow residents to be inside while waiting for someone coming to meet them and be able to see through the door.

Ms. Wilson asked about the grass strips added on the sides of the drives to the garages.

Mr. Barrick stated that these were 18-inch wide strips where they intended to plant crepe myrtles.

Mr. Gorman stated that these grass strips would be a headache to maintain.

Mr. Barrick stated that these grass strips were intended to help define the areas and provide some vegetation.

Mr. Taylor recommended gravel or a durable plant in these areas instead of grass.

Mr. Gorman stated that the grass strips would be run over and torn up by vehicles and should be removed. In order to add vegetation, evergreens could be planted up against the building to provide greenery. The grass strip areas could be replaced by uni-paver.

Mr. Taylor stated that there really is no prime entrance to the building because of the design. However, by default, the high visibility elevation facing the street is the prime entrance and the design should treat this entrance as such instead of just punching holes in the brick.

Ms. Wilson stated that she gives credit to the design team for the clubhouse design as it now looks like it is part of the community.

DAP member Sujit Mishra commented that the intersection in the front of the clubhouse looks incomplete. It sits at the junction of the X and Y axis of the street framework. He commented that there needs to be more design included to help resolve this issue.

Mr. Mishra agreed that the pergola proposed for the north end of the site should be moved out of the parking area to the terminus of the street adjacent to Building #6.

Mr. Mishra stated that the building façade facing the street needs to be treated as a main entrance and that the current design is a major improvement from May's meeting but more can be done.

The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor made the following motion:

1. "The applicant continue to consider the terminus of the North/South street and create focal elements at either end of that street in the form of gazebos or pergolas or some architectural element to terminate the street." Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

2. "To follow up on the grass strip notion, I would ask you to look at a way to treat that designation between the driveways in a way to survive foot and tire traffic and think about using special paving and reserve the planting for a zone just a few feet up against the building." Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

DAP Member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

3. "Study the porch entrances on buildings a little bit more and that includes architecture and landscaping to make those a focal point feeling like a building entrance which includes adding site amenities like seating, a study of the architecture, and adding landscaping." Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

DAP Member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

4. "Look at some width of sidewalk around the triangular center park area that allows people to get back and forth to the different buildings and also to the clubhouse in an easier way than they can now with appropriate crosswalks." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

DAP Member Sujit Mishra made the following motion:

5. "To think about the clubhouse and that it needs more resolve in the triangular area and how it connects with other buildings and the intersection of the two roads." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

3. Call to Adjourn

DAP Vice Chair Mr. Don Taylor adjourned the meeting at 8:13 pm.